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عنوان المحاضرة : What is Feminism?

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What is Feminism?

Feminism is a social, political, and intellectual movement that advocates for the rights of women on the grounds of equality of the sexes. At its core, feminism seeks to challenge and dismantle patriarchal structures, promote gender equality, and ensure women have the same rights, opportunities, and freedoms as men.

There are different waves of feminism throughout history, each focusing on specific issues:

First wave (late 19th to early 20th century): legal rights, especially suffrage (the right to vote).

Second wave (1960s–1980s): workplace, reproductive rights, and sexuality.

Third wave (1990s–2000s): diversity, identity, and intersectionality.

Fourth wave (2010s–present): digital activism, #MeToo movement, gender fluidity.

Was Emily Brontë a Feminist?

Emily Brontë (1818–1848), author of *Wuthering Heights*, lived before the formal rise of feminist theory, but her work is often considered proto-feminist. Here's why:

Why scholars associate Brontë with feminism:

1. Strong female characters:

Catherine Earnshaw is passionate, rebellious, and refuses to conform to traditional gender roles. She resists being controlled by societal expectations.

2. Critique of patriarchy:

Wuthering Heights depicts oppressive male characters (like Heathcliff and Hindley) and explores the damage they inflict on women and the domestic space.

3. Women's struggle for independence:

The novel shows how women's lives are constrained by marriage, inheritance laws, and social expectations.

4. Subversion of traditional romance:

The novel challenges idealized romantic tropes, portraying love as obsessive, destructive, and tied to power.

5. Refusal to conform:

Emily Brontë herself lived unconventionally. She published under a male pseudonym ("Ellis Bell") and avoided the public eye, asserting her independence in a male-dominated society.

So, is Emily Brontë a feminist?

Not in the modern activist sense, since feminism as a movement didn't exist in her time, but many of her ideas and themes align with feminist concerns. Today, literary critics often read *Wuthering Heights* as a feminist text or, at least, one that anticipates feminist thought.

In the Victorian era, especially during the early nineteenth century, legislation regarding marriage dictated that the husband was the authority and the woman was to be subjugated in relation to him or any other man of her relations for that matter, for instance her father. Laws concerning the married woman and the unmarried woman differed. The married woman's rights were notably restricted in comparison to the husband's or the unmarried woman's rights. Françoise Basch describes how "the girl who contracted a marriage – which the entire weight of nineteenth-century ideology put forward as being the culminating point of a woman's life – lost at one stroke all her rights as a 'feme sole', that is to say a free and independent individual" (16). From a legislative point of view, marriage was a poor bargain to a woman. However, the woman had little choice in

whether to marry or to remain a 'feme sole', as prevailing attitudes pressured women to marry,

doubtless making life for an unmarried woman equally challenging.